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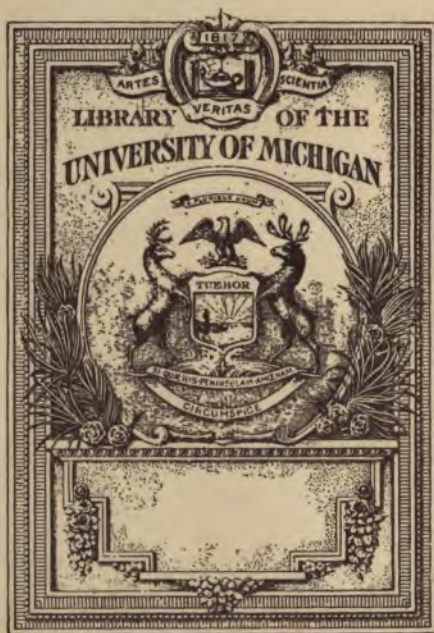
ELECTIONEERING UP-TO-DATE

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C. R. BUXTON

AND

J. C. HAIG



THE GIFT OF
James K. Pollock

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ELECTIONEERING UP-TO-DATE

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Electioneering Up-to-Date

With some
Suggestions for Amending the Corrupt Practices Act

By
CHARLES RODEN BUXTON

With Three additional Chapters on the Case of
Thanet

By
J. C. HAIG
(Late Liberal Election Agent for the Thanet Division)

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PREFACE

IT is not the object of this book to make charges against either persons or parties. Many of the cases referred to would be held, on an election petition, not to come within the scope of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, 1883. Many, again, of the practices described are deeply rooted in custom, and would not be condemned—nay, would in some cases be applauded—by public opinion. Nor is either of the established political parties attacked, to the exclusion of the other; though it is true that the party which counts among its members the larger number of wealthy men figures the more prominently of the two, and that a stricter law would, in the main, be to the advantage of the Liberals at the poll.

The object of the book is to draw attention to electioneering practices which make elections unreal, foster dishonesty, and degrade the standard of public life; and to suggest certain amendments of the law. The aim is to give the reader the means of judging for himself. With the facts before him he will be able to say how far the conclusions are well or ill founded.

The first five chapters illustrate certain practices habitually carried on in almost every part of Eng-

land; practices which are generally acknowledged and accepted, but which cannot be reconciled with the spirit (whatever may be said of the letter) of our electoral legislation. The sixth deals with the amendment of the law. In the remaining chapters, contributed by Mr. J. C. Haig, Liberal election agent in the last contest in Thanet, an attempt is made to show, by an admittedly extreme example, how a really clever candidate can reduce the Corrupt Practices Act to a farce. The suggestion is that, in other divisions, results similar in character may be achieved, though probably with less complete success.

If I were addressing those only who have seen the inner working of an election, a few general statements would probably have been sufficient. To them the practices to which I have referred are familiar enough. But my hope is to convince the sceptical and the indifferent; and for this purpose specific examples are necessary. I have, therefore, quoted a certain number of cases by way of illustration. The series might be multiplied indefinitely. The material is to be found on every hand.

At the same time it must be remembered that much of this evidence is by no means easy to acquire in a perfectly definite form. A large number of cases are kept back from the mistaken idea, so prevalent after an election contest, that it is better, at all hazards, to let sleeping dogs lie. Many, again, of the practices referred to are taken as a matter of course, and the idea of drawing attention to them does not even occur to those concerned.

Others remain unnoticed because those who have had a part in them are ashamed to let them be known. Others are suppressed because a number of individuals benefit by their continued existence, and their continued existence depends upon the privacy which protects them. Others, in which fear plays a part, are concealed because those who have suffered by them are not willing to risk the further material harm which might follow if they published them abroad. Those who pursue the last named practices are in the habit of pointing to this silence as proof that no intimidation exists; in other words, of using the silence which their own terrorism has created, as evidence against the fact of the terrorism itself.

The cases which come to light must thus run the gauntlet of many different motives and influences, all tending to concealment. If only a few cases were available for proof, these few would imply the existence of a larger number still unrevealed. Even if they did not, even if the few cases stood alone, they would still represent an amount of degradation and hardship which ought if possible to be avoided.

I have taken some pains to ensure the accuracy of every statement of fact. Shortly after the General Election I made enquiries on this subject from some 260 candidates, half of them Unionist and half Liberal, and a few others concerned in the election. My letter contained these words: "The only cases which would be of any use are, of course, those within your positive knowledge,

such as, if they came within the law, you think you would be able to prove in court." I received replies from all parts of the country, both rural and urban; from those places where electioneering is generally supposed to be pure, as much as from those whose reputation in this matter is low. In every case where I have utilised the facts supplied me I sent a second letter to my informant, so as to secure further assurance of "their strict accuracy." For some of my facts I am indebted to Mr. Allan H. Bright, who kindly placed at my disposal a quantity of material which he had collected within the last few years. The press, my own experience, and the reports of election petitions—though these last I have used but sparingly, since the facts they contain are tolerably familiar to the public—have been the remaining sources of my information. I am aware that I should have drawn a more vivid picture if I had been able throughout to give names and places. Most of the facts used, however, were given me on condition that nothing should be said which would serve to identify the persons concerned, and so expose them to possible retaliation. If, again, I had repeated matters of hearsay—stories of the type always prevalent at an election, which often contain a substantial amount of truth—I should have produced something more superficially striking. But I have thought that nothing could really be more impressive than the bare recital of a few completely attested facts.

Although this book contains proposals for

amending the law, I would not be thought to suggest that mere legal restriction is the ultimate remedy for the evils I have indicated. These evils are merely the symptoms of a deeper malady. It is public opinion which is at fault. A large part of the public, indeed, does not realise the facts at all; but a still larger part, though it realizes, does not condemn them. It would be interesting to trace the cause. The truth is, I think, that we have not genuinely accepted the democratic principle. We do not see that that principle requires the free expression of the voter's opinion; that without such free expression, democracy is a farce. The reason why interference with opinion is not much condemned is that opinion itself is not much respected. And it is, perhaps, for the same reason that we are so blind to the moral aspects of the electoral problem. We should object to bribing a judge; we should consider that a sacred trust was reposed in him, and that we had induced him to betray it for a mean reward; and not only to betray it, but to keep up the solemn pretence of exercising it at the same time. We see no harm, however, in cajoling the voter to betray a trust which, in its kind, is equally sacred. And similarly, we do not resent, in the case of the voter, the tyrannical use of power. All these things are condoned by the well-to-do; we cannot blame the poor if, too often, they adopt a like standard. Elections will not be substantially purer until public opinion becomes cleaner and saner.

Meantime, a beginning must be made. At pre-

sent, the protest is heard too seldom. The public is careless or incredulous of the evil; the politician will not face the unpopularity of exposing it. On the surface, indeed, there is much to be said for letting it alone. Influential persons are offended, feelings are wounded, by any attempt to meddle with tacitly accepted conventions, or so much as to mention in public the facts which society has agreed to ignore. Unfortunately, however, there are other persons—far more numerous, though not always equally present to the imagination—to whom these same conventions and facts are a burden and a degradation. It is among such persons that the protest finds an echo; among the most thoughtful of the rank and file in every political contest; above all, among the obscure and inarticulate men and women who feel the bondage to which their dependent position consigns them, who have suffered, it may be, for their opinions, and who can only tell their little tale of wrong under the seal of secrecy.

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ELECTIONEERING UP-TO-DATE

I—GROUNDBAITING

THE candidate who, after making political problems his study, engages for the first time in a Parliamentary election, is destined to a rude awakening. Immersed in facts and arguments, he has come to imagine that the public, like himself, is interested in the search for the true or the expedient. The electors above all, he supposes, must be eagerly critical of the political opinions of those who court their suffrages. Even if at ordinary times their interest may grow dull, it must at any rate be excited to keen activity as the crucial moment of the election draws near. He hammers out new and more convincing methods of stating his belief. He sharpens his weapons of persuasion. He dreads the day when he may be confronted with some profound question which he cannot answer.

The reality is something far removed from the dream. The dream, indeed, does not prove to be altogether delusive. He finds many a man whose political attitude is dictated by principle, and who scrutinises a candidate's views with care. There are enough of such men to satisfy him that his

trouble has been well worth taking, even from the point of influencing votes. But he finds, also, that he has left certain important factors entirely out of account. For the present they may be conveniently described by the negative epithet of "non-political." It is with these factors, or some of them, that I propose in the following pages to deal.

The most obvious, at first, is the lavish expenditure which has come to be regarded as a necessary qualification for a Member of Parliament. The electors approach him, not, as he may have fondly imagined, to ascertain his opinion, to seek his guidance, or to engage his interest in local concerns which may be affected by Parliamentary action; but to ask him to bestow his money on churches, cricket clubs, shows, annual dinners and a score of other deserving objects. Nor—this is the point which I would emphasise—are those who make these requests in any way deserving of blame. They are acting in accordance with a generally accepted system, and that system is not of their own creation. It has been created by the wealthy politician. It is the outcome of the deliberate use which rich candidates have made of the opportunity which such contributions afford of buying the constituency. In a small area, and at a time when the electorate was based on a narrow franchise, direct bribery was the simplest method; but to bribe many thousands of electors is beyond the power even of the Nabobs of modern finance. It is more economical, as well as more satisfying to the conscience, to spread abroad, by a free use of one's resources, a general

impression that one is a kind-hearted man. The belief that the candidate is a good fellow, that large bills will be run up at shops and hotels, and paid without a murmur, that waiters, drivers, porters, and the rest, will have a share of the booty, that needy individuals will not be allowed to suffer, that deserving institutions need not be afraid of a deficit on the year's accounts, casts a glamour over a man's political convictions which is far from ineffective on the polling day. This form of non-political influence differs from others in that its effects are less capable of precise definition. But it is perhaps even more pervading. It is in the atmosphere. It is generally accepted as proper. In popular opinion, refusal to accept the system can only be due either to poverty or niggardliness.

The channels of this influence are many. At one end of the scale is the candidate who spends more than he otherwise would on his personal requirements, and takes care to spend it in the constituency. At the other end is the candidate who spends money broadcast in any direction in which it is likely to serve his ultimate purpose. Between the two lie a great variety of practices. Subscriptions to clubs and societies form one convenient mode of influencing votes. The direct bestowal of relief on a large number of individuals among the poor is more expensive, but is a profitable outlay for those who can afford it. In certain constituencies, the promise or suggestion of Government orders is an effective weapon. Charities and charitable institutions supply a useful means of getting into touch

with constituents. Entertainment and hospitality, however, are the most irresistible of all the methods of ground-baiting. A few instances, of one kind or another, are given in the following pages.

"Two liberals," writes one of my correspondents, "voted for D. (the Conservative candidate) because he gave £1 last year to a club to which they belonged."

"Even amongst Nonconformist ministers and deacons, etc.," says another, "I have constantly heard it used as an argument against the Liberal candidate, that he was not a monied man."

"Coal tickets and food tickets," writes a friend who stood for a London division, "were given to a very large number of people, and I am informed that they were in some cases pushed under the doors when the tenants were absent. I have seen some of these tickets, in which the place for the name of the recipient was vacant, but the name of the subscriber (the opposing candidate) was printed in huge letters diagonally across the ticket."

When Colonel Long stood for the Evesham division in 1895, the *Birmingham Daily Post* of January 7th recommended his candidature in the following terms: "In one case of a man who was taken ill with rheumatic fever, Col. Long ordered his butcher to send him meat two or three times a week and, as soon as he was able to go, sent him to the baths at Droitwich."

The wife of a certain M.P. came one day into a Northern market town in her motor. "It was at once surrounded by a crowd, eager to shake hands.

A small boy tried to get near in vain, and began to weep. 'Never mind,' said my friend, 'I'll lift you up to look at her.' 'I don't want to look at her,' said the small boy, still weeping, 'I want to get near. I want my penny.' "

In the Haggerston case it appears that a candidate arranged for his visiting cards to be distributed as food tickets, each entitling the holder to 6d. worth of food. His agent afterwards wrote to the local papers that "the Unionist candidate had arranged to give 50 tickets a day to deserving applicants."

On July 10th, 1895, Mr. Grotian, who had sat for Hull, is reported to have said :

"I was going to tell you that Lord George Hamilton told me with his own lips, the last time he was in Hull, that they had spent £900,000 in Earle's yard during the time he was in office and I was your member. After all, am I not right when I say I am a strong advocate for a very good dose of bread and butter politics?"

At Camborne, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, a placard was issued calling the attention of voters to the services of Mr. Strauss. It concludes : "Eighthly, he subscribed large sums to deserving local institutions and charities, and ninthly, he contributed a £100 a year to the Miner's Accident Fund."

A friend writes : "On one occasion I was present at a public meeting at which a new candidate was introduced to his possible constituents. I observed that my neighbour, whom I did not know, became more and more fidgety as the speech of the candi-

date progressed. Presently he turned to me and whispered : ' Last night I had a bazaar. Mr. A. (the member) came and spent £10 at my daughter's stall. When the election comes he will come to me and say : " You recollect what I did for you on the occasion of that bazaar. Now, I want you to do something for me ;" and,' (turning pathetically to me) ' what am I to say to him? ' "

During the contest for the Cricklade division in 1898, some of the tenants of Lord Emlyn (one of the candidates) issued a letter in which, after stating that Lord Emlyn was " a thorough gentleman," they continued : " If anyone goes to Golden Grove (Lord Emlyn's home) on errands or business, they have a pint of good ale, bread and cheese, and a shilling."

" Entertainments," says a Kent correspondent, " at which the amount paid (if any) does not cover the cost, have been exceedingly numerous. Liberals have been given " (i.e. by the Conservative candidate's agents) " free tickets marked ' 2/6 ' for dinners which must have cost 3/6 or more per head. Smoking concerts, with free drinks and cigars, have also been very frequent. On one occasion Mr. K. stated that at his opponent's meetings men had to pay themselves (i.e. for refreshments) or go away."

On the hearing of the Yarmouth petition it was proved that, for some time prior to the election, a series of meetings were held by the candidate, mostly, if not all, in public houses, " with a certain amount of drinking, not always at the expense of the person who drinks ;" and that an " At Home "

was held, "at which about 300 drinks were given away." The words in inverted commas are taken from the judgment of Mr. Justice Channell.

A recent case before the magistrates at Droitwich throws an interesting sidelight on electioneering methods. A publican was charged with permitting drunkenness on licensed premises. The charge was dismissed, but the evidence for the defence was interesting, and remarkably frank. The publican said: "A political gathering was being held in the clubroom . . . a political smoking concert. Mr. Moseley ordered the room and paid for all the drinks and cigars that were consumed. The company had seven bottles of whisky, besides beer, cigars and minerals." The Mr. Moseley referred to was another witness for the defence, and said: "He did the agency work for the Conservative Association in Mid-Worcestershire. He attended the smoking concert on the 14th. It was a gathering invited to the inn by himself. He engaged the room and paid for all that was had to drink. About 90 people partook of his hospitality, but not more than 60 or 70 were present at any one time." A similar style of entertainment was referred to by counsel in the recent Worcester petition, though, as the defence was abandoned, the evidence on this point was not called: "There was an organization known as the National Conservative League, which had eleven lodges in Worcester. They met at different public houses in the city every week, and the duty was cast upon the chairman to stand drinks to the people present." This organisation, if common

report is to be trusted, is not confined to Worcestershire, but plays an important part in many of the Western shires. On the occasion of the Worcester petition in 1892, Mr. Justice Wills described the practice as "objectionable, demoralising and dangerous to the seat."

A Shropshire correspondent, speaking of the same "hospitable" institution, says: "They have branches all over the Division at the village inns. The squire is often chairman, and the labourers are bound to attend weekly or fortnightly meetings. It is the custom that the chairman should stand drinks."

The Lancaster Conservative Association, in 1895, organised a series of smoking concerts, of a similar description, which it called "Politics and Pleasure." They were attended by the man who afterward became election agent. The Annual Report stated that by this means "a certain class of voters, who do not usually trouble themselves with politics, have been reached—we trust with good results."

Some of the speeches quoted on the hearing of the Yarmouth petition were amusingly illustrative. The Liberals were taunted with having complained that Tory meetings were held in public houses. "Why should not we have our drop of beer," said one speaker, "when they suck their acid drops in schoolrooms?"

In the Rochester case, tickets which entitled the holder to a meal, including sandwiches, ale and claret, were to be had for the princely sum of 3d.

"A substantial meal," writes an Essex corres-

pondent, "was given to 500 labourers and their wives at Green Hall, when the hostess, in the presence of K. (the member) and two reporters, stated: 'She wanted no thanks, but she expected they would vote for K.'"

Again: "A meat tea was given to the labourers in one of the ————parishes, at the close of which the clergyman's wife stood at the door and told the men they must vote for D."

Entertainments on a large scale are not confined to one party. In the Bodmin petition it appeared that a great "At Home" was held on September 6th, 1905, at Llanhydroch, Lord Clifden's seat, to which every elector was invited. It was given by the Cornwall Liberal Social Council, a body which was unknown up to that time, and has not been known since. At the supper there were meat and temperance drinks. The party was described in a local paper as "the greatest political function ever held in Cornwall."

It may well be imagined that the combined effect of money spent on all or several of these objects is very great.

In a West country town a candidate "paid an agent, £300 a year to live in the town and to write frequently to the newspapers under various names, extolling the generosity of the candidate and saying 'What does Mr. G.' (the Opposition candidate) 'do for the town?' He paid for a vast entertainment with fireworks and prizes for sports, silver watches, etc., and also for several concerts."

In 1895 the late Sir Herbert Naylor Leyland

changed sides and vacated his seat at Colchester. The *Times* correspondent (February 11th, 1895) feared that Captain Naylor-Leyland's "unpopularity might prejudice the electors against any Unionist candidate" and said that "it may incline the electors to give a chance to a man who has continued to display a lively interest in the material welfare of the borough." He then stated that Sir Weetman Pearson's firm had been "getting some boilers made at Colchester," that Sir Weetman had given a "munificent donation for providing a free library," and further added that an elector had said to him: "I am opposed to Home Rule quite as strongly as you are yourself, but see what a lot of good Sir Weetman will be able to do for the borough." Next day a letter appeared in the *Times* from Captain Naylor-Leyland's agent, Mr. G. Virtue, stating that Captain Naylor-Leyland "took great exception to the statement that he had neglected the material and political welfare of his late constituents," and then proceeding to enumerate Captain Naylor-Leyland's benefactions. They included "wholesale distribution of coals in the winter months," and the letter ends "It would, I think, frighten most people were I to mention the total of the amount that I know he spent upon Colchester during the time that he represented it."

It would be hard to find a stranger contradiction between practice and profession than is revealed by these customs. Their purpose is perfectly obvious and universally recognised. No one in ordinary conversation dreams of questioning it. Many can-

didates withdraw their subscriptions after their defeat as a matter of course. Even the rank and file of their supporters show no hesitation whatever in associating their benevolence with the attainment of political ends. "A Tory Squiress," for instance, describes in the *Oswestry Advertiser* the "entertainments got up for the amusement of the people, concerts, theatricals, flower shows, ending with the inevitable dance, to say nothing of fêtes and school treats (to all denominations) provided solely at the land owner's expense," and concludes significantly: "For the present I propose to leave the almost daily applications for subscriptions to the generosity of the new member (*i.e.* Mr. Allan Bright, whose victory was then recent). It is an ill wind that blows no one any good. The result of the Oswestry election will save me this year at least £100." It is all as open as the day. Yet the judges pass it over unchallenged, and content themselves with solemnly hinting that it "might become" an improper influence. Mr. Justice Grantham goes the length of drawing a sharp distinction between the candidate for Parliament who spends money to procure popularity, and the candidate who spends money to procure votes. Of this distinction it is enough to say that it requires a legal mind to appreciate it.

Apart from the evil of influencing votes on improper grounds, this expenditure gives an altogether undue advantage to the rich candidate. How is the poor man to compete with him? The other has already on his side, in all probability, the whole

weight of social influence, and the power, by means of supporters and friends, of swamping the constituency with countless vehicles on the polling day. When to these are added unlimited facilities for distributing his wealth through other channels, the candidate who has his living to earn is simply driven to the wall.

A certain amount of resistance is offered to this degrading custom. The results, however, have not so far been encouraging. Dr. Hutchinson, who announced that he did not consider himself as a relieving officer, was rejected at the next election by a majority more than twice as large as that which had sent him to Parliament. Mr. J. L. Hammond, who announced that he was unable to subscribe to local charities at Dover, found himself next morning, heralded to the constituency by the glaring headline, "Not a penny for Dover." He subsequently retired. Outside a polling station a farmer said to me, "Why should I vote for Smith? Thompson spends £100 where Smith spends five." And Smith (then the sitting member) was accordingly defeated.

On the whole it is not surprising that the prudent party wirepuller should agree with a gentleman who, in recommending the candidature of Mr. Lindsay Hogg for Eastbourne, is reported to have said: "A resident candidate was better than a carpet bagger, and it was a comfort to have a man with a lot of money." There is an engaging simplicity about the phrase; but one would like to know the candidate's feelings when he heard it uttered.

II—VALUABLE CONSIDERATION

GROUND baiting is, of course, a preliminary process. It creates in the mind of the electorate an impression that the candidate is a good fellow. It pre-disposes the voters towards the right side. But this pre-disposition must now be clinched by some more direct appeal to the individual. The same methods may be employed, but they will have a more obvious relation to the important event which is impending. The approach of the election is the signal for an outburst of benevolence, positively overwhelming in its volume and variety. In different constituencies it takes different forms. There is hardly one, in all probability, which does not receive its share.

Gratuities double in size. Work is more generously remunerated. Rent is paid for those who are in arrear. Teas and parties are arranged. Persons who have hitherto restrained their hospitable instincts within narrow bounds are seized with a sudden desire to spread happiness and jollity among their friends. New clubs are created, their inauguration being celebrated by a supper at the public house. Even total strangers are infected by the general atmosphere of conviviality and, while discussing the politics of the day, are not unwilling

to stand drinks all round. Ladies who have isolated themselves in their country houses drive into the county town (their carriage decorated, of course, as is only natural at the season, with the party colours) and are struck by cases of distress among the poor to which their attention had never before been called. Poor mothers are told to give an order to the milkman for two or three weeks; the account may be sent to the Hall. Parcels of groceries arrive for those whose table has hitherto remained unsupplied. It is understood that the donor (a well-known local politician) would prefer his name not to be mentioned; in spite, however, of all his efforts, it leaks mysteriously in every direction. District visitors and other dispensers of bounty, who happen to be also charged with the duty of canvassing, add to the agreeableness of their visits, and save themselves trouble at the same time, by putting off the distribution of sugar or treacle or tea until they can combine it with their political mission. Defunct charities are galvanized into life. Tickets of various kinds (bearing the subscriber's name) descend like manna from above. Enthusiastic politicians cannot restrain themselves from scattering sweetmeats and pennies among the astonished but delighted children. Joints of meat are distributed broadcast. Cold is combated by blankets or coal. Hunger is averted by invitations to the soup-kitchen, free of charge. Nor are these the only methods. There are others by which the two sides of the unholy bargain are more closely connected still. "No vote, no beer"—"2/6 a

vote"—these phrases express familiar transactions which at this critical moment the clever and unscrupulous party man cannot afford to neglect.

A few examples may be chosen for illustration. Three of these are from Kent, a county which has attained an unenviable notoriety for the shameless character of its corruption. The rest are taken from districts of every kind, both rural and urban.

One correspondent writes: "A dock labourer, asked by Mr. P., lodging house keeper, if he had got any money at the election, replied: 'No, but Mr. B. paid us all something extra because we were so quick in unloading the ship.' Mr. B.'s horses were all decorated with Tory colours."

Just before the last election, according to a North country correspondent, Mrs. L., a prominent Conservative lady, invited all the women of the village "to meet Mrs. B." (the candidate's wife), the invitation winding up conspicuously with the word "Refreshments."

"The mayor of the city," writes Mr. W. J. Fisher in the *Independent Review*, "accompanied one of the candidates to several public houses at an hour when they were most likely to be frequented, and, affably entering into conversation with the bar loungers, treated all and sundry to drink and cigars."

An informant writes: "In M. it is the practice to send to certain publicans a round sum of money before polling day. On that day all people introduced by the Tory workers are supplied with drink by these publicans free of charge, so that any one witnessing this cannot say that he saw any worker

treat a voter, but he can say that he saw the voter receive drink without paying for it."

"One public house in O. (a West country market-town) supplied drink to all comers for a penny a quart (one-sixth of the usual cost) in the recent election. The difference was made up to the publican afterwards."

The next example is from a signed statement in which I have altered the names: "Just before the General Election, at Dewhurst, Lady Jane Grey, of Dewhurst Park, called upon me. Upon my going to the door with my baby, she said: 'Oh, you have a baby.' She asked me if my husband was in good work. I said 'No' . . . and if I had plenty of milk. I told her I had not got much. She said: 'Would you like some milk?' I said 'Yes.' She said: 'You can have a quart for a fortnight and tell your milkman to send in the bill.' I had the milk for a fortnight. No mention was made as to the election." Lady Jane Grey, according to my informant, was previously unknown to the fortunate mother. She was a canvasser.

Another correspondent, from a London division, says: "H. C., as President of the P.H. Christmas Parcels Fund Society, gave away 1070 Christmas parcels value 3/6 each, at Christmas time, three weeks before the election."

The following three signed statements, from a small manufacturing town near London, are interesting. The persons who made them live at Nos. 7, 9 and 28 in the same street: "Between 3 and 4 p.m. on the 15th January, 1906, Mrs. L. of the

Abbey, called and enquired after the health of the children. She said : ' Who is Mr. I. (my husband) voting for?' I said : ' I don't know.' She said : ' Mrs. B.' (wife of one of the candidates) ' is coming round my parish bye and bye on behalf of her husband.' She asked me how many I had in family. I said two. She said : ' Oh, that makes four. I don't know if any little thing is going to be done, but I have to take the number of the families, and I thought if I popped round before, that would help.' About 5.15 p.m. the same day, Mr. L., Mrs. L. and Mrs. B. called . . . and had a conversation with my husband. On the Thursday before the election I received one pound of sugar brought by Mrs. L. In presenting it she said she had had some sugar to give to whom she thought. She had been so busy with Mrs. B. she had not had time to weigh it up before. On Thursday, 25th, she called again and said : ' I thought you would like a tin of golden syrup, or you may have a pound of sugar if you like.' I had the syrup. I have not seen her since, and I have never received a present from her previously. Mrs. L. is a district visitor. She did not ask me to influence my husband with regard to his vote." The next says : " My husband is a boot repairer and we have a family of six children, ages from 6 years to one month. Mrs. L. is the district visitor. On Friday, 15th January, 1906, she called upon me. My husband was present. She asked him if he would vote for Mr. B. He replied : ' No, certainly not.' About an hour after she again called with

Mr. L. and Mrs. B., who asked my husband if he would vote for Mr. B. My husband replied 'No.' She said: 'Cannot I convert you to vote for Mr. B.?' My husband said: 'No, I was born a Liberal and will keep one.' Although I have six in family, no treacle nor sugar was given to us." The last says: "On the Thursday before the election, Mrs. L. called upon me and brought me a tin of golden syrup and a pound of sugar, and said I was not to say anything to anyone about it. On Monday, 15th January, 1906, Mr. and Mrs. L. who were accompanied by Mrs. B. called at my house and asked if my husband was going to vote for Mr. B."

In a Northern seaside town, two Unionist workers "distributed coppers to children in Chapel Street."

In a neighbouring district, "H. J. of West Gate was called upon by Mrs. M. on polling day, and asked to vote for B. (the Unionist candidate). He replied that the only man who thought about him at Christmas was P. (a prominent Liberal) who sent him some beef. Mrs. M. left and within half-an-hour 7lb. of beef was delivered at H. J.'s house. Soon afterwards Mrs. M. called, and took H. J. to the poll."

"One lady," writes a correspondent from Shropshire, "sent 10cwt. of coals to each person in the village, and the carter was told to say, 'This is from a Tory; what have the Liberals done for you?'"

"Much influence is used amongst the women," writes another, "in municipal elections here by distributing coal tickets and blankets on the eve of

elections. These gifts are the provision of certain charitable bequests, but they are almost entirely used for political purposes. In the last municipal election I came across a case of a woman who had received on the day before the poll half a cwt. of coal, a few loaves of bread, and a blanket, and this entirely settled her vote."

In a Yorkshire town one of my informants found a Liberal taking lunch with a Unionist canvasser, who had brought him from the polling station, and who paid the bill. In the course of the meal the voter frequently referred to the canvasser and his people as "good Samaritans," and kept referring to some similar incident which had occurred at a previous election. At the close, however, with the air of one who had reserved his best joke to the last, he announced to my informant, much to the canvasser's discomfiture, that he had voted for the Liberals.

Ordinary treating and ordinary bribery I have not thought it necessary to deal with at length. The public is familiar with them. They have been proved, time after time, at election petitions. When they are proved, the transaction is generally so distinct in its character, and so inexplicable on any other than corrupt grounds, that the judges are forced to bring it within the scope of the Act. My object has been to give some idea of the more indefinite, but not less effective, inducements which are commonly held forth at election time, the object of general approval, even of applause.

The examples here given are far from exhaustive.

They do not illustrate, in all its variety, the whole series of practices by which the final seal is on the voter's fidelity. The list might be considerably prolonged. The cases given are, for the most part, those which happen to have come to my knowledge through personal enquiry. The published reports of election petitions, and even the daily press, would yield enough material to satisfy the most incredulous enquirer.

Clear instances of public house treating—admittedly the commonest form of electoral stimulus—are less frequent than they would otherwise be, because the thing is so easily concealed.

Those who reap the benefit, either as retailers or consumers, are bound together by a common interest not to betray, even if they were able to do so, the generous hand which supplies the necessary funds. Drink, again, is so constantly supplied without immediate payment, that the source of the payment at any particular time is often impossible to trace, even by close observation. Fortunately, however, for the cause of election purity, this particular fact of public house treating receives strong corroboration from an unimpeachable source. For the week ending 15 July, 1895, the increase of revenue from beer (there having been no change in the law) as compared with the same week of the previous year was £337,000, indicating an increased consumption of about one million barrels. The first pollings took place on July 13th. The Local Veto Bill, it would appear, was accompanied to its grave by a veritable Saturnalia.

III—BOYCOTTING

THE appeal to greed, powerful and pervading in itself, is reinforced by the appeal to fear. Shortly after the recent General Election, according to several of the daily papers, a fishmonger of Hyde received the following letter from a customer :

“ Hyde, February 9th.

“ Churchill.—I have decided to deal elsewhere for fish, so you need not call here again ; and I should like your trifling account sent in. It has got to a serious pitch now, and Conservatives must hold together and support each other.—Yours, etc., E. Radcliffe.”

Mr. Churchill sent a courteous reply, pointing out that he had never given any offence, and had served Mrs. Radcliffe's household for a great many years. “ I do ask you,” he added, “ to reconsider the matter, and to think that you are not only doing me injury by stopping your trade with me, but also my wife, who is so seriously ill that I want all the work and trade I can get to be able to get the nourishment she requires. As you know, I am very poor.” Mrs. Radcliffe, however, was implacable. She replies that she has “ already ordered

fish elsewhere." She has always found him "very civil and obliging." But why, she asks, should she "consider" him, when he "not only voted, but worked hard for a man who has bound himself to increase the taxation on landowners, and to do his best to do away with the Church I like to attend." After this description of Mr. Lyell, M.P. (who has now been returned to Parliament by the efforts of Mr. Churchill and other Liberals), Mrs. Radcliffe shows what is her view of the functions of a Member of Parliament by recommending Mr. Churchill to ask him for pecuniary help—in return for services rendered. "But I fear," she adds, with a cuttingly sarcastic reference to Dr. Hutchinson's now famous protest, "he would only tell you he is not a relieving officer." She goes on to refer to a matter which ought to be carefully looked into in Dorsetshire. "I hear a report that the Conservative employers of labour in this and other counties are about to form a resolution that they will not in future employ either tradesmen or labourers who do not support the Unionist cause." If this report is true, Mrs. Radcliffe's friends will be indulging in a practice, that of boycotting, which they probably regard as confined to Irish Nationalists. A similar statement was recently made by an employer, to the effect that "his neighbours were not going to employ Liberals, and neither would he." It would be of public advantage if, in such cases, a civil action, whether successful or not, were brought against the persons concerned for conspiracy to injure the plaintiff in the conduct of his business.

But no such disagreeable reflection troubles the mind of Mrs. Radcliffe. She "cannot wonder at this, as it is the object of Liberals to do away with all landed gentry and others in England." Landed gentry and others! One wonders who the "others" can be? I am reminded of a lady, prominent among the ex-Liberal *nouveaux riches* of one of the Home Counties, who, addressing the workmen at a flour mill, requested their support for the candidate of her choice on the ground that the Liberals were aiming at the destruction of "us aristocracy."

The correspondence above detailed, if it were an isolated case, might be merely amusing. But, as a matter of fact, it is only one example of a process which is going on in every corner of England both before, during, and after every political contest. There are thousands of Mrs. Radcliffes. They are persons of education, blameless according to their lights, charitable, serenely unconscious of anything at fault in their behaviour. They adhere to a political cause which they believe to be good, and although they would not say in so many words that the means were a matter of indifference, yet they use all the means in their power to promote that cause, without much inquiry into the rights and wrongs of their action. The danger consists in this, that the means are so ubiquitous and so effective. Rich people, with large establishments, are scattered over the country. Most of them happen to be Unionists. I do not say that they would act differently if they happened to be

Liberals. Round each of them gather little circles of dependents, to every one of whom it is almost a matter of life or death to retain the custom of the great house. A change from one shop to another, or from one dealer or professional man to another, which means nothing to the person who orders it, means often serious adversity to the person who loses by it. The mere threat of such a change is a powerful weapon. A few instances of its use, for definite and well-understood political reasons, are enough to frighten a whole neighbourhood for many years.

As a matter of fact, so strong is the conspiracy against Liberal tradesmen, that the open expression of opinion is confined to a comparatively small fraction of them, men of exceptionally independent character. An informant writes to me from Kent that, time after time, he has known tradesmen refuse to sign nomination papers for Liberal candidates because they have been definitely threatened with loss of business if they do. Even if an actual threat has not been used, they have experienced the ill-effects of such action in the past, and fear that they may do so again.

It may be worth while to add some further evidence of this practice of boycotting. To those who have been behind the scenes at elections the thing is familiar enough. But the ordinary reader requires specific examples, in order to bring home to his imagination a true impression of the definite personal hardship inflicted.

Miss L., the proprietor of a boarding house, after

the General Election, was heard to say to a boot-maker, "I hear you are a good Conservative, so I shall deal with you instead of O." (a Liberal). "I want to stop this practice of Conservatives dealing with Liberal shop-people."

The Rev. A. Poland Upcher, Vicar of Halesworth and Chediston, says in his Parish Magazine: "we must see that we support and patronise in trade only those who are loyal to the Church."

A sadler in the small market town of F. writes: "I perhaps was a trifle bolder in displaying posters, placards, and window-bills, etc., than my fellow Liberal tradesmen, but since then I have missed several of my good customers; some of them are Mr. ———'s tenant-farmers (mentioning one of the candidates); also a job-master. Many of my customers told me at election time what a fool I was, taking the bread out of my children's mouths by going against Mr. ———. This is how we get hit and have to suffer."

In Sussex, a working watchmaker received a letter in 1895 asking him if he was in favour of the Local Veto Bill, and adding—"If your answer is in the affirmative, please send me in your account up to to-day by return." The account was paid and closed.

The same tradesman received a letter from an ex-Liberal, whose clocks he used to wind weekly, saying: "I shall not require you to do it any longer, as you are so fond of interfering with other people's business."

Some years ago, in Leamington, Hants, the Primrose League sent round to its members a list

of tradesmen who were to be dealt with if possible, and of others who were to be avoided.

A grocer and wine merchant in a seaside town received a letter from a well-known surveyor, who is a leading Churchman, to the effect that his custom would be withdrawn if the grocer was opposed to the Unionist candidate.

A young coal merchant in a western county called with his usual order on two customers; they both definitely informed him that, as he had voted Liberal, and was a member of the League of Young Liberals, they must take their custom somewhere else.

A rope manufacturer, who travels the markets in the same county for orders, stated soon after the late election that the last month had been the worst that he had ever experienced, a great many orders having been taken from him on account of his vote.

A grocer, in the six months following a recent by-election, lost £80 in his turnover, the whole being due to the trade withdrawn from him by Conservative farmers.

Before the recent election, several lady workers went round systematically to the Liberal shopkeepers of a certain town and informed them that, if the Unionist candidate were beaten, they would take their custom elsewhere.

A candidate in one of the Home Counties has been requested by tradesmen supporters to stop making strong party speeches, as they expect to suffer seriously unless he does.

A jobbing blacksmith, in Hampshire, was asked

by a customer to support his party at the election. The blacksmith refused to tell him how he would vote, and he withdrew his custom, curtly adding that any further communications must be made through a solicitor.

An official in a certain seaport town refused to deal any longer with his baker, on the ground that the baker bought his flour from a Liberal miller.

These examples could be matched over and over again by any Liberal candidate from his own experience.

I have limited myself in this chapter to a single point—the boycotting of tradesmen on account of their political opinions. The subject is one which stands by itself, and can be treated separately. Its effects are easily pointed out and easily understood. But it is a mere fragment of the whole subject of non-political pressure at elections. In the country districts, in particular, this pressure constitutes nothing less than an engine of tyranny, not less effective because it is largely worked by those who are unconscious of what they are doing, or because the co-operation of its numerous parts is rather accidental than designed. There is no part of the electorate which is not subject to its influence, and its effect is to reduce the independent expression of opinion, except at times of unusual upheaval and excitement, within far narrower limits than most well-meaning people believe. The whole process is one which renders true democracy impossible, and exalts pretence and dishonesty into a recognised and accepted place in the national life.

IV—THE EMPLOYERS' SCREW

SKILFUL electioneering does not stop short at the persecution of a few despised individuals. It aims at operations on a larger scale. It seeks the support of those whose influence is the most powerful in its effects, and embraces the largest possible number of electors.

The tradesman, at the worst, is not wholly dependent on one customer. The workman, on the other hand, depends, as a rule, on one employer. The main part of his livelihood comes from a single hand. The hand that dispenses it can exert proportionately powerful influence. And this fact is not lost sight of by those whose zeal for a political party outruns their sense of justice, or the kindly feelings of everyday life.

What is not generally recognised is the ease with which the latent and potential pressure may be brought into use. No great effort on the employer's part is required to make his workmen see, or think they see, the desirability of falling into line with his political opinions. The ground is already prepared. The employer may make light of the influence that attaches to his position. Not so the workman. He, for his part, is acutely conscious of it. In one of the Western counties a large num-

ber of workmen wrote privately to one of my correspondents in order that they might finally satisfy themselves of the secrecy of the ballot; they wished to vote for one candidate, but had been compelled by fear to promise their votes to the other.

No doubt this fear is prevalent or otherwise in proportion to the degree of intelligence and organization among the workmen concerned. Trade unionism, which gives the individual workman the support, moral and practical, of his fellows, has cultivated the sense of independence. The fear is commoner among labourers who are untouched by the labour spirit. It dominates above all the agricultural labourer, to whom mutual support is unknown, and in whose eyes his employer and himself—the one all powerful, the other virtually powerless—appear as the only parties to the momentous bargain on which his living depends. A town workman, an engineer, in the course of canvassing for a Liberal candidate, heard much of the methods used by the other party, and especially of the tone adopted by its canvassers towards the ordinary village voter. "I should like to hear them talk like that in a trade union workshop," he remarked to me indignantly towards the close of the contest.

It may be admitted, then, that there are differences of degree; but the fear of losing employment is widely spread; and in these circumstances, a single statement, a single act, on the part of the employer, is enough to put into operation a force which is already in existence. He has but to indi-

cate in some way or other, direct or indirect, the connexion between political support and retention of employment. At once the whole weight of the possible injury, vaguely feared and often exaggerated, is brought to bear on the minds of those who look to him for their weekly wages. The question is not "Does the employer possess influence over men's votes?" but "Does he use it?" To this question there can be but one answer.

Some employers appeal publicly for the support of those whom they employ. Lord Harlech, for example, who, as the Hon. C. Ormsby Gore, formerly represented Oswestry, took the chair at a meeting at Selattyn, in favour of the Conservative candidate, and in the course of his speech said: "He would do his best before the next election to send Mr. Bright (the Liberal member) to the right about. He appealed to all those he employed and all those connected with him to assist him in returning Mr. Bridgeman to Parliament when the time for the election came round."

Others emphasise the matter in casual conversation. An agent on a large estate near the Welsh border, recently put the matter to a capable young man in this way: "I say, Tom, what a fool you are! I could put lots of little things in your way if you would come on our side!"

"Mr. T.'s agent," writes a correspondent, "told Mr. T.'s electrician, C. D., that if he valued his position he would not support Mr. E., as they intended to make M. a Conservative village."

Besides these declarations there are many acts by

which, without appealing for political support in so many words, employers are in the habit of indicating, in a significant manner, their desire to influence those who work for them, and thus of bringing into play the great economic power which they wield. Some conduct the candidate whom they support round their works or their estate, markedly refusing the same favour to his opponent, or even precluding him from entering their domain at all. Others invite their workpeople to sign nomination papers for the candidate supported by the firm. Others drive them to the poll in vehicles decorated with their party colours, or, if it is a case of walking, direct their agents to accompany them. Some go so far as to give them distinct and peremptory orders, not only as to when and how they are to go to the poll, but also as to the candidate for whom they are to vote when they get there. Others give special facilities for voting to those who hold the "right" views. Others show themselves hour after hour at the polling station, or instruct their agents to attend there, to see that all goes well. The following cases are chosen, not as particularly striking, but as typical of practices of which almost every town and village can afford examples.

"Mr. A." (the candidate), writes one, "went round with one of the T.s (local brewers) personally canvassing all the men."

"In the recent C. election of 1906," writes another, "nomination papers were introduced into large works, and men were asked by their employers, or the foreman, to sign them. As a result

nearly 1000 signatures were obtained—i.e. nearly 1000 written promises to vote for Mr. W. out of an electorate of somewhere about 6000."

Again: "One man whom I know to be honest and reliable, assures me that he has never given a Conservative vote in his life, yet he invariably signs a Conservative nomination paper. He does a lot of work for a Conservative auctioneer, Mr. J. H. He called in to his office and said: 'Oh, Mr. R., I want you to sign this nomination paper,' and R. signed, fearing to lose business."

Mr. W. J. Fisher, ex-Liberal candidate for Canterbury, says (*Independent Review*, April, 1906): "Under the pretence of saving their men time and trouble it is frequently made an excuse by large firms to convey their workpeople to the poll with every circumstance of display on behalf of a particular candidate—clearly a form of intimidation. I have myself witnessed the spectacle of workpeople being driven to the poll by their employers in vans and cars decorated with the party colours and the portrait of the candidate favoured by the firm."

In Kent "the foreman at a certain works in the town informed my brother that he and all his men would ride to the poll in Conservative vehicles which were sent to the works, though he knew that nearly all the men intended to vote against the party in whose vehicles they had to ride, fearing loss of work if they refused."

At M. in Yorkshire I have seen the agent of a large estate bringing up the estate workmen in a long file at the prescribed hour. I cannot say how

they voted. But it would be absurd to deny that the bias in one direction was fairly strong.

In a certain district in Kent, the large farmers "gave a half holiday on the day of the poll to those of their men who promised to vote for the Unionist candidate, and drove them to the poll. The unfortunate Liberals got no half holiday and of course had to walk over four miles to vote."

The steward of a large landowner, who employs most of the men in a certain village near London, remained near the door of the polling station for the greater part of the day. Those who talked freely with the men were well aware of what, to their minds at any rate, this demonstration conveyed.

The following is a copy of a notice sent to a labourer by his employer. I have altered the names: "Croft House, Lower Dene, 25th Jan., 1906. Thomson (126). You must be at Grange Farm, on the road, at 9.30 to-day, to go in your cart to record your vote for Mr. James at Trent. George Clarence Withers." My informant adds: "There is reason to suppose that all his men (15 or 16) received similar letters."

But the chief means by which this influence is exerted is that of canvassing, whether in person or by the agency of foremen or other representatives. This is a familiar proceeding.

Such are the various forms of political appeal in which employers commonly indulge. It is obvious that they are actuated in doing so by the consciousness that their economic position adds to the

appeal a force which would otherwise be wanting. To deny that the practice rests on such a foundation is absurd. If it does not, why do employers not appeal to their friends and acquaintances at large? Why do they devote special attention to those whose livelihood depends on them, unless for the reason that they intend and hope to make that fact a lever for political pressure? Why is their support valued so highly, if not because they command, and may if they choose carry with them, many votes besides their own?

It is sometimes argued, in reply to such suggestions, that the employer cannot know how his employés have voted. The answer to this is, in the first place, that very few working men are sufficiently reticent to be able to keep such a fact to themselves, when conversation is turning constantly upon the politics of the moment and upon the respective merits of rival candidates. But even if this were not so, there are means by which a voter's politics may be ascertained without much difficulty. This is a fact which people of comparatively independent position do not realise. They should ask themselves this question:—What is a supporter of party B. to say when he is asked by the employer or his representative, acting in the interest of party A., how he will vote—particularly when he is asked, as he frequently is, to write down his name in accordance with his promise? There are four possibilities: (1). He may abandon his opinion altogether in order to save himself the trouble of resistance; promising his vote, and giving

it, to the party with which he disagrees. (2). He may boldly declare his opinion, refuse his promise—and risk dismissal. (3) He may decline to answer at all. But this is in effect equivalent to a positive refusal; it means that he is at once put down as hostile; for if he was friendly what reason could there be for his not saying "Yes?" (4) He may promise to vote for the candidate of party A., and then go and vote for the candidate of party B; in other words, he may, and indeed constantly does, cut the knot by telling a lie. It is a singular commentary on the state of public opinion, that the prevalence of the last-mentioned practice is actually quoted as a defence of the existing system. If promises count for nothing, it is asked, what does it matter how much pressure is used to extract them? It is difficult to argue with those who thus condone an offence against justice by contending that men escape from it by committing an offence against honesty. In truth, none of these four possible results can be regarded as satisfactory. Elections should be an expression of opinion. Individual voters should not be exposed to the alternative of material or moral harm. A system which leads to such results cannot be defended.

But the argument that the secrecy of the ballot is some defence to the employé, often breaks down from another cause. The secrecy of the ballot is still, over large districts and in many minds, a matter of doubt; and as long as such a state of affairs exists, every kind of improper pressure is rendered easy.

A poor labourer in the village of H., not 30 miles from London, believed, and repeated in all seriousness, the statement, made to him by a canvasser who seems to have enjoyed a humorous imagination, that "there is a reflector in the polling booth which shows how you vote." One may infer that, in less clumsy hands, the task of playing upon the doubts of the unlettered voter can be accomplished with considerable effect. It was notorious in the Horsham bye-election of 1904 that the belief in the secrecy of the ballot was undermined both privately and publicly. The answers given at a meeting on November 7th, 1904, at which Sir Henry Harben presided, can hardly be said to be calculated to convert a voter who was doubtful upon the point. According to the *Sussex Daily News*, the accuracy of whose report is admitted, "one query was, whether the ballot was secret? Lord Turnour (the candidate) said: 'Under the peculiar circumstances he thought it better that others should answer that question.' The chairman said: 'The ballot was intended to be secret, but he did not believe it was.' (laughter)." One of the other speakers stood out in marked contrast by emphatically asserting that 'ballot votes are never revealed.'

To all this it may be, and will be, replied: "What do words matter? No tangible harm is done. There may be a threat implied; but who cares, if the threat is never carried out?"

Now, even if no tangible harm is done, the evil is none the less real, and those who allow it to exist are none the less deserving of blame. The excuse

of ignorance cannot be admitted. The employer knows the power that is his. He knows the fear which that power inspires. So far from using it to frighten his men into declaring an opinion which they do not hold, he ought to take steps to make known to them, with the utmost clearness, that their vote is their own, that they can use it freely, and that they will on no account suffer for it. But the most effective mode of meeting the suggested criticism is, of course, to prove that the fact on which it professes to be based is untrue. The threat is carried out. The attempt to influence the votes of workmen derives its strength and point from cases where positive action is taken, and where men suffer in a tangible manner for the presumption of disagreeing with their employer. It is not often that dismissal can be traced beyond all possibility of doubt to political causes. It is naturally more prudent for the employer to wait until public attention is turned in some other direction, and then to look out for some pretext for discharging the obnoxious servant. Or a large employer, if he is more patient, may wait until a slack time arrives and dismiss, first of all, those of his men with whose political opinions he disagrees. Difficult as it is to trace, it is this kind of injury which is often most present to the workman's mind. Cases, however, of dismissal on political grounds are not uncommon.

For example, an informant writes: "I went round and saw Mrs. N., whose husband worked for Mr. W., a builder in this town. Mrs. N. told me

that Mr. W. was alway taunting her husband with his Liberalism. Last April Mr. N. was dismissed although Mr. W. would give him no reason, and said that he had no complaint to make against his character. He had worked there for 18 years."

Another correspondent says: "A young man of good prospects and fair ability was employed as clerk in a large provision dealer's business in D. He had been in this employment for 3 or 4 years, and was doing exceedingly well. During the recent election he worked for Mr. F. (the Liberal candidate), wore a party tie, and voted Liberal. Three weeks after the election his employer told him that he would prefer someone else in his place. He gave him a week's notice. It should be mentioned that he had been forewarned by the employer's son who told him that they would have no Radicals in their establishment. He was a very quiet, inoffensive young man in every way, was bred and born in D., and has now to go clean out of the county to find employment, leaving his wife with her mother until he will be able to make another home for her. I knew this young man personally. He was a member of the D. branch of the League of Young Liberals."

Mr. Eli Peters, market gardener, of Nuthourne, was charged on June 8th, 1906, with having dismissed three workmen (one of whom had been over 5 years in his employment) for voting for the Liberal candidate and putting up Liberal bills in their windows. The bench of eight magistrates dismissed the case on the ground, not that the

facts were untrue, but that there was no proof that Mr. Peters knew that the votes had actually been recorded !

A correspondent in the South of England says : " I had to give an undertaking to one man—before I could get him to give me any information over the petition—that if he lost his employment, as he felt certain he would, I would see to his wife and children while he went to Canada for work, and endeavour to help him collect his fare. The man was a thoroughly honest fellow, and his brother a most sterling character. Both soon after lost their employment, though they had given satisfaction for years, we accordingly raised a private subscription and sent both to Canada."

In the Whitby Division, in the course of the bye-election of 1905, a labourer, who lived with a farmer who employed him, came into dinner one day wearing a tie of the " wrong " colour. The farmer ordered him to take it off ; he refused. He was dismissed on the spot, receiving his week's wages in lieu of notice. Efforts were made to effect a reconciliation, but the farmer refused to take him back.

In Lincolnshire, a farmer dismissed three of his labourers immediately after the election, avowedly for voting Liberal.

A still more detailed story found its way into the press from the Watford Division of Hertfordshire. According to the *Daily News*, whose account has not been contradicted, Mr. E. J. Layton, a member of a firm of printers and stationers engaged in business in the City, employed three gardeners,—

Winters, Mathews, and Montague, at his house in Langley Road, Watford. The three gardeners canvassed on behalf of Mr. Micklem. One of them received soon afterwards the following letter :

“ Colnehurst, Watford. February 17th, 1906.

“ Mr. Montague,—Referring to my conversation with you last Saturday and what has since come to my knowledge, I should be glad if you, Winters and Mathews would find other situations as soon as possible. As I do not wish to create hardship, you can any of you stay on with me up to and including March 17th, or leave before that date. I wish you clearly to understand that I claim no right to object to your holding political views which in my opinion are entirely opposed to the interests of gardeners. If you think your interests as a class are best advanced by acting in political opposition to those who support you and your families, that is your affair. On the other hand, I maintain this place, Colnehurst, for no other purpose than rest and pleasure. To secure this end I treat my servants with great liberality as to wages, hours, holidays and easy work, and I expect them in return to give me a good service and a whole-hearted support. It is obvious that my peace and happiness are not promoted if my men, whilst accepting the privileges which I give them, spend time in speaking on behalf of and in voting for those pledged to attack my Church, interests and just rights.

(Signed) Edwin J. Layton.”

All three men were dismissed. That the dismissal

was purely due to political reasons is obvious from the following copy of a reference given to the men on leaving :

“ Colnehurst, Watford.

“ J. Winters, my second gardener, is leaving me to-day, and my head gardener will testify as to his work. I am pleased to add that I consider him obliging, and quite trustworthy.

(Signed) “ Edwin J. Layton.”

March 17th, 1906.

V—THE LANDOWNERS' SCREW

THE spirit and tradition of feudalism are still strong ; and the claim of greater independence for the tenant arouses the bitterest feelings among those wedded to the old ideal. There is so much that is desirable and pleasant in the intercourse between farmers and landlords, that the very suggestion of any possible harm in it seems to them to savour, not merely of revolutionism, but of base suspicion and gross ingratitude. Such a charge excites greater hostility than those to which reference has been made in previous chapters. Those who apologise for the old system are not greatly disturbed by the charge of lavish expenditure on gaining popularity ; for this seems to them innocent, and not out of harmony with their conception of what rural society ought to be. Nor are they moved to any marked resentment when wealthy people are accused of refusing to deal with Liberal tradesmen, or of dismissing Liberal workmen ; for this practice they regard as natural, inevitable, indeed as something like a duty ; the existence of Radical leanings being visited with a quasi-moral condemnation, as involving inherent faults of disposition. But it is very different when

the conduct of the country gentleman is criticised. To insinuate that dear Mr. A., such a good man in *every* way, is not perfectly just to his tenants, when he takes so much trouble about them and does so much for them; when he is always on such excellent terms with them (except, of course, that objectionable Radical B.,—but then he is such a surly and suspicious *character*) :— this strikes them as something profoundly offensive. In their indignation at its odious character they exaggerate the charge itself. They imagine that a personal attack is made on the character of a whole class, and they fancy they can repel the attack by quoting single instances of proper and unimpeachable behaviour on the part of an individual here and there with whom they happen to be acquainted.

It will hardly be denied that in the case of tenants, as in the case of tradesmen and employes, the opportunity of bringing pressure to bear is very great. It may be, indeed, that to abstain from using it requires a certain measure of actual self-restraint. The opportunity is even greater in the case of tenants than in that of tradesmen or employés. A man will not, as long as his relation with them continues, alter the daily conditions of his workman's or his tradesman's life. He may dismiss the one or leave the other. But this is all; this, as a general rule, is the limit of his power. In the case of the tenant it is different. The "terms," good or bad, in which the personal relation consists, are a more important factor in his happiness. The respective obligations are much less clearly

defined. There are a hundred matters—questions of repairs to buildings, questions of remissions of rent and the like,—in which there is a wide margin between strict compliance with the letter of the lease, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fair and generous treatment which a good tenant ordinarily receives.

The opportunity for pressure is there. Is it used? Certainly it is believed to be used. And this is in itself an evil which should be taken into account and, if possible, counteracted. "I live under so and so. It won't do for me to show my colours." "I'll do all I can, but it must be on the quiet." "If I offend him, I should soon find it out when I want something done." These are familiar phrases everywhere.

The desire to escape displeasing the landlord, even in the smallest degree, is in fact a most important factor in influencing the tenant's conduct. There are many ways in which, according to the popular opinion, such displeasure may be visited. Immediate eviction is the strongest and most obvious; but, for that very reason, it does not often take place. This fact is utilised by those who deny the existence of the pressure here spoken of, to prove their point. Immediate eviction, however, is not the only thing, it is not even the main thing, which the tenant fears. Later on, he thinks, some slight disagreement will arise between him and his landlord, or a possible competitor for the tenancy may come upon the scene. Very little will suffice to turn the scale one way or the other.

Without anything being said, perhaps even without anything being thought, about the election, the mere fact of the political disagreement may lose him his tenancy. Or the anticipated injury may be of an even smaller kind. The tenant who is a political supporter and sympathiser is expected to get his roof mended in good time before the rainy weather. He whose relations with his landlord have been ruffled by political disagreement will have to wait, likely enough, till the letter of his lease requires it.

Where there is so much smoke, it is incredible that there should be no fire. In point of fact the tenant's fear appears to the careful observer to be well founded. Why, if it is not, do landowners openly emphasise the importance which they attach to political agreement between themselves and their tenants?

The point is driven home in various way. Sometimes it is done by public declaration.

Lord Alington, speaking on the relations between himself and his tenants, said on February 2nd, 1905, that "it was impossible for him in the present state of events to look upon any Radical (the policy of whose party was one of spoliation) as a friend of his."

Colonel Kenyon-Slaney wrote to a gathering of his tenants: "It will be recognised that while one of my tenants finds his chief occupation in denouncing landlords and abusing the system under which land is occupied, while at the same time he has not sufficient self-respect to give up the holding

he occupies, it makes it difficult and unpleasant for me to come to such gatherings, or to exchange ideas with my tenants."

In the state of dependence which exists, such utterances have immense weight. The result is plain. The tenants are shrewd enough to take note of these generalities, to apply them to the practical details of their conduct, and to infer that they are not likely to be made without being acted upon.

Another method, perhaps the most effective of this kind, is personal canvassing by the landowner, his agent or members of his family. On an estate in Shropshire, a landowner's agent went round to all his tenants, getting them to sign cards showing which way they would vote. He explained the necessity for their doing so, by telling them that Mr. D. (the landowner) "wanted to know who were his friends and who were not." The landowner's wife and daughter constantly perform this work, and feel that they are discharging a duty in doing so. They may honestly think that all they are doing is giving friendly advice, talking things over, scattering a few crumbs of knowledge. They may, though this is perhaps less common, feel no resentment where their advice is rejected. None the less, their interposition brings a powerful force into play. How is the tenant to know whether opposition is safe or not? A visit from the landowner or his representative directs his mind to the dependent relation in which he stands, and connects it with the political preferences of the person on whom he depends. And this must be (unless we are to

assume an ignorance which is hardly credible) present to the mind of the landowner who authorises such proceedings.

The same effect is produced by sending posters or canvass cards to tenants.

E., a landowner near London, sent a canvass book to each of his tenants-farmers, asking them to canvass their men and see that they went to the poll. A local minister writes: "My informant was Mr. S. J., a young, struggling farmer, a tenant of Mr. E. He is an earnest Liberal and the election has been to him one of considerable difficulty. He seems afraid that his present position as a tenant is quite precarious."

In the same county a firm which had a large number of tenants sent them, just before the election, posters suitable for hanging in their windows, directed against the Liberals.

Another potent means of bringing influence to bear is the presence of the landowner and his agents during a great part of the polling day at the door of the polling station. To quote my own experience only: I have seen two landowners, who between them owned most of a certain Northern village, attend for the greater part of the day at the polling station, buttonholing those who came to vote. I was told that at a previous election, when none of the opposite party were present, they had been considerably more energetic in impressing their opinions on intending voters. This practice has received judicial condemnation. Baron Fitzgerald has said: "I entertain grave doubts whether

this assemblage of landlords at the places where the actual polling takes place, is either prudent or proper."

An informant says: "At H., Lord D.'s agent stood outside the polling station, and said to each of the Earl's tenants as they came up to vote, 'we have reason to think that you voted for Mr. S. at the bye-election; see that it does not happen again.'"

Sometimes the veiled threat is put into words. One correspondent writes: "Mr. W. who lives on a farm at J., on telling a canvasser that he intended voting Liberal, was told that he could prepare to leave his house."

Again: "W. M. told his tenant T. H. that if he did not vote for D. he would turn him out of his cottage."

Another writes: "A woman, being a weekly tenant, sublet two rooms to my agent as committee rooms. As a result of this she was threatened with immediate eviction by her landlord if she did not at once terminate her agreement. The rooms were retained by local Liberals agreeing to indemnify her against loss. I do not know whether the landlord carried out the threat after the election."

Another informant sends me a statement signed by a tenant farmer, as to a conversation with his landlord before he went to vote. "He said that I wasn't to go against my conscience, and if I didn't want to go against my conscience, not to vote at all; but I (sic) should be very pleased for you to

vote for M. If I went against him, I should take my ticket and march."

But all this, it may be contended, is evidence merely of a kindly interest—a desire to inspire right political opinions in those with whom one has special opportunities of coming into contact. This line, of defence, however, breaks down, for instances are brought to light, from time to time, in which the threat, veiled or open, is put into practice. Few though these instances may be, they imply the presence of many more which are not discovered. Even if they did not, they are enough in themselves to supply the basis for the widespread fear of which I have spoken.

The case of Mr. Fred Horne, which recently attracted some attention, is in point. His landlord, Colonel Kenyon-Slaney, on the occasion of a rent audit dinner, sent to his tenants, to be read out by his agent, the letter from which I have quoted above, referring to Mr. Horne's political opinions, and suggesting that if he had "sufficient self-respect" he would "give up his holding." Mr. Horne wrote in reply that he was perfectly satisfied with his tenancy at Hinnington, and had no objection to holding land under a man with whose political opinions he could not agree; but that if his presence was objectionable he would, in order to save annoyance, waive his right to notice, and give up the farm, which he had occupied for fifteen years, at once. This the Colonel accepted. When his agent met Mr. Horne to arrange the matter, a memorandum was drawn up, and accepted by the

former, stating that they entered on the business on the understanding that he had no wish to leave the farm, but that Colonel Slaney objected to his presence at Hinnington.

Another story turns on a question of ecclesiastical rather than of political opinion, but the rural mind does not draw a hard and fast distinction between the two. It is recorded in the *Wiltshire Advertiser* for October 26th, 1905. Mr. A. W. Perren, a tenant-farmer, received the following letter from the Misses M. Margaret Niven and Isabel G. Niven, who, writing on September 26th, from the Grange, Marden, near Devizes, say :

“ You are aware that when you took our farm, we expressly stated that we wished to have a Churchman as tenant, and that we had refused to let to more than one farmer because they honestly confessed that they were Dissenters. As you no longer fulfil the conditions on which we let you the farm, we have expected that you would yourself offer to give it up, but since you show no sign of doing this, we hereby give you notice to leave our farm and farm premises at Michaelmas, 1906.”

Mr. Perren, writing on October 9th, admits that on taking the farm he was asked if he was a Churchman and that he had since become a Baptist, but adds :

“ The simple reason why I did not give you notice to leave when I joined the Baptist Church was that

I would not insult you by thinking you expected so unreasonable a thing."

Miss M. Niven replies on October 14th :

"I had intended to ask you to come to see me on my return, as I wished to tell you how disappointed we were at your desertion of the Church. But after reading your letter, I think an interview would be useless, as you only seem able to see one side of the question—that is, your own. Our view is that Church doctrine is right and that Dissent is wrong, and that we should not be doing our duty by our Church if we kept as tenant one who goes about preaching doctrine that is contrary to her teaching. You took the farm knowing that we made it a condition that our tenant should be a Churchman. As you have chosen to break through these conditions, our agreement naturally comes to an end."

It cannot be said that these ladies were exacting anything more than the pound of flesh which was their due. Still, even if they had done nothing more than make opinion the test of fitness for tenancy, they must have impressed on the neighbourhood, with considerable force, the dangers of outspokenness, and the advantage of a subservient attitude of mind in those who depend upon the favour of their superiors. And the effect of the story does not end there. The Wiltshire farmers are not likely to investigate closely the exact cause

of the eviction. The fact itself is sufficiently eloquent, and the lesson will not be lost.

A West country farmer received notice to quit his farm on February 2nd, 1906, just after the election, in which he had supported the Liberal candidate. In the course of his reply to the notice he wrote: "I can only come to the conclusion it is because of my religion and politics." His landlord gave no denial, but merely wrote: "I have only to say in reply that I consider it expedient to have a change of tenancy." Another tenant, on applying for the farm, was told by the landlord's brother that the farm would not be let to anyone unless he was a Conservative and a Churchman.

In Hampshire a tenant wrote to a friend on 9th February, 1906: "I am leaving F. (naming his farm) next month, having notice from K. (naming the Unionist candidate) without any explanation. I have been here 55 years and generations back over 400 years."

Nor are such evictions confined to agricultural tenancies. A peculiarly flagrant case occurred in 1897 in a London division, in which sixteen tenants were cleared out to make way for more subservient persons.

From the nature of the case, definite examples can only be quoted where actual loss of tenancy takes place. Oppressive acts of a more trifling character, whether they consist in commission or omission, are such as it is difficult to describe with accuracy. The reports, therefore, do not reach the degree of certainty which I have regarded as

indispensable. But it is a long way from turning the tenant out of the tenancy, to treating him in an obliging and generally friendly manner. Between the two lies a wide region of possible pressure. If the extreme measure is sometimes taken, it may be presumed that measures of a less drastic character are at any rate not less frequent.

VI—THE AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

IF the processes here outlined were the only avenue to a political career, it would not be surprising if that career came to be regarded with general contempt and aversion. Fortunately, even under the present law, this is not the case. The rise of Labour as a political force has proved that these processes can be dispensed with. An increasing number of candidates, again, are openly refusing to accept them. And this is not all; there is no reason why the present law should not be considerably strengthened. It is the object of this chapter to summarise such amendments as are likely to prove effective in filling those particular gaps, or some of them, which have been discussed in the preceding pages.

The difficulty which meets the reformer at the outset is, that the terms which define election offences appear to be already as wide as possible. The condemnation of the law is already visited on everyone who "shall, directly or indirectly, by himself or by any other person on his behalf, give, lend, or agree to give or lend, or shall offer, promise, or promise to procure or to endeavour to procure, any money or valuable consideration to or for any voter, or to or for any person on behalf of

any voter, or to or for any other person, in order to induce any voter to vote or refrain from voting, or shall corruptly do any such act as aforesaid on account of such voter having voted or having refrained from voting at any election;" (Corrupt Practices Prevention Act, 1854, Sec. 2.); upon "any person who corruptly by himself, or by any other person, either before, during, or after an election, directly or indirectly gives or provides, or pays wholly or in part the expense of giving or providing, any meat, drink, entertainment, or provision to or for any person, for the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person, to give or refrain from giving his vote at the election, or on account of such person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting, or being about to vote or refrain from voting at such election;" and upon "every person who shall, directly or indirectly, by himself or by any other person on his behalf, inflict or threaten to inflict, by himself or by any other person, any temporal or spiritual injury, to induce or compel such person to vote or refrain from voting, or on account of such person having voted or refrained from voting, at any election;" (Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883, Sec. 2.).

And yet, sweeping as the terms are, it is evident that the Act has not succeeded in carrying out the intentions of its authors. Judges have interpreted it so narrowly that it has been robbed of nearly all its terrors. Less and less use is made of it at every general election. In 1886, though there

was much hesitation in bringing its then untried machinery into force, 11 petitions were brought, of which 7 were successful. In 1892 and 1893, there were 12 petitions, 6 successful; in 1895, 8 petitions, 2 successful; in 1900, 7 petitions, 2 successful. In 1906, there have been (excluding Sheffield, where corrupt practices were not charged) 4 petitions, of which, at the time of going to press, two have been successful. The figures are a rough but not inadequate test of the effect exercised by the judges' decisions on the minds of intending petitioners. While, therefore, the main design and structure of the act can hardly be bettered, an attempt must obviously be made by smaller and less heroic reforms to give substance and reality to its provisions.

These reforms may be grouped under the following heads :

1. Statutory definition of terms, so as to attach to them the broad interpretation which the ordinary lay mind puts upon them.
2. Fuller use of existing powers.
3. Improvement of machinery.
4. Prevention of opportunities for treating.
5. Prevention of excessive expenditure.
6. The opening of Parliamentary candidature to poorer men.
7. Wider changes.

I—STATUTORY DEFINITION OF TERMS

For instance, in discussing the presence of a corrupt motive in any particular case, regard should

surely be had to (a) the amount of the previous expenditure of the person concerned, and (b) the question whether any sudden increase of expenditure can be accounted for solely by motives other than corrupt ones. The existence of a corrupt motive should not be regarded as negatived by (a) the possible presence of other motives in addition, or (b) the fact that the expenditure in question is not directed to influencing particular voters. Again, in discussing the question of the date at which election expenditure begins, regard should be had to (a) any meeting or resolution by which the candidate was recognised and recommended to the electors as the representative of a political party in the locality, and (b) the amount of his previous subscription (if any), and his subsequent subscription, to the local party association. Some variation might be allowed in the maximum according to the length of the candidature. So, in the case of intimidation, the mere canvassing of tenants or workmen by a landowner or employer, or their agents, should be treated as an exercise of undue influence.

II—FULLER USE OF EXISTING POWERS

CASES of bribery, treating and undue influence should be dealt with by the police, like other offences, whether a petition is brought or not. At present the theory of the law appears to be that the offences referred to are merely wrongs suffered by the defeated candidate. They should be treated,

on the contrary, as offences against public order and morality. Similarly, the representative of the public prosecutor should, on the hearing of an election petition, examine at once into any case where there is *prima facie* evidence that a witness has been tampered with, and should call other witnesses, if necessary, than those of the petitioner and respondent.

III—IMPROVEMENT OF MACHINERY

✓ THE time for filing petitions should be extended. Under the present law, a decision has to be made before sufficient enquiries can be completed, and the risk to the petitioner is proportionately greater. The venue for the hearing of petitions should, if necessary, be changed to some place outside the constituency. At present the intimidation of witnesses, especially on entering and leaving the Court, is a serious evil. Finally, a petitioner should be allowed to call witnesses, even though they contradict other witnesses whom he has already called. The reason is that in most cases the petitioner is obliged to rely upon witnesses who have been in the confidence of the opposite party, who are liable to be tampered with, and who are almost necessarily hostile to him.

IV—PREVENTION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR TREATING

THE holding of political meetings in public houses should be prohibited. All public houses should be

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closed on polling day. For remedies on a larger scale we must look to the extension of the franchise and the enlargement of constituencies. The larger the electorate, the less is the opportunity for improper treating.

V—PREVENTION OF EXCESSIVE EXPENDITURE

THE lending of vehicles for conveying voters to the poll should be entirely prohibited, on the ground on which the hiring of vehicles for that purpose is prohibited already, viz. : that it gives undue power to the wealthy party. It enables that party to poll, roughly speaking, the whole of its own supporters, and in addition a great number of waverers who have really no opinion to record. It is also, as has been shown, a source of serious intimidation. There is no reasonable excuse for allowing it to exist. A polling station could be provided at every elementary school. The infirm voter could be allowed to record his vote on a form provided for the purpose, being visited, if necessary, by the presiding officer or his deputy.

Next, the amounts allowed for election expenditure should be limited. Bill posting is a cause of ridiculous waste. All that is required is the expense of circulating an election address, advertising and holding a reasonable number of meetings, paying agents and clerks, and hiring committee rooms. Election accounts should be more rigidly scrutinised.

A suggestion which would meet with strong sup-

port—above all, it is hardly necessary to say, among members and candidates—is that all subscriptions by members and candidates, other than those for purely political purposes, should be entirely prohibited. The remedy may seem a heroic one, but the choice is between this and none at all. Any limitation which falls short of completeness is open to insuperable difficulties. A necessary corollary to this proposal would be that political associations should be limited to such expenses as would be legitimate if incurred by the candidate himself.

VI—OPENING OF PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATURE TO POORER MEN

THE payment of returning officers out of public funds, the payment of members of Parliament, proportional representation—all these would bring poorer candidates, and a larger number of candidates, into the field, and would break down that narrow limitation of choice which now gives to the rich politician an undeserved and disastrous pre-eminence. The possibility of real representation would be largely increased.

VII—WIDER CHANGES

OF the more general aspects of progress it is not necessary to speak in detail. Many of them have an important bearing on purity of election. Re-

forms in taxation will, it may be anticipated, gradually reduce the number of exceptionally rich men—of men, that is, whose wealth gives them a power over the votes of others which they are strongly tempted to use. At the same time we may hope that the growth of a genuine patriotism, the spread of education, and the closer acquaintance of the people with the direct operations of government, will lead large numbers to take a more serious interest in political issues, and thus become less and less amenable to non-political pressure. We may yet see the full-grown democracy pursuing, with a conscious responsibility, the public welfare, undeterred by the appeals to greed and fear which cast discredit on its younger days.

CHARLES RODEN BUXTON.

THE CASE OF THANET

THE CASE OF THANET

Illustrating the methods of Mr. H. H. Marks, M.P.

I—LEGITIMATE CORRUPT PRACTICES

WHEN Parliament passed the Corrupt Practices Act in 1883, there is no doubt that it intended to put a stop to corrupt practices of every description, and also to prevent excessive expenditure on the part of candidates in the conduct of elections. Whether the intentions of Parliament have been given effect to is a totally different matter. Speaking from experience, I can testify that where a candidate is rich, clever, and unscrupulous, he can drive a coach and six through the Corrupt Practices Act and win almost any seat that he chooses—at least in the South of England. Such a man you have in Mr. H. H. Marks, the member for the Isle of Thanet Division of Kent.

It may be said that Mr. Marks is an exceptional man, and that you cannot found a case for the amendment of the Act upon the proceedings of a single individual. I venture to think that this view is a mistaken one, for whilst

it is true that Mr. Marks resorts to methods which not one candidate in a thousand would ever dream of employing, the fact that he does so, and is able to score by the use of corrupt practices in defiance of the Act, is the best possible proof of the necessity for some more stringent code of regulations.

One of the methods of evading the Act cleverly practised by Mr. Marks in Thanet was the convivial banquet and smoker. Several of these entertainments were given on a large scale in Ramsgate and Margate between the by-election in 1904 and the General Election in 1906. They were not given by the member himself, according to the clumsy plan pursued by the candidates at Yarmouth and Bodmin. Mr. Marks and his agents knew a trick worth three of that. The banquets were ostensibly given by a political organization, and a charge of 2s. 6d. or 3s. was ostensibly made for tickets. In one case the half-crown tickets were issued by a Working Men's Association. Of course working men are well able to pay half-a-crown for a dinner, exclusive of wines, especially in a place like Margate during the winter. Anyone who has ever lived through a winter in Margate when there are practically no visitors, knows how plentiful money is all round, and how easy it is for hundreds of Conservative working men to pay four or five shillings for one evening's entertainment! Speaking seriously, however, there is no doubt some tickets *were* actually sold for these dinners; but those who were patient and waited, could easily get them for

nothing. Who the mysterious benefactor might be, people could only guess, but they generally guessed right the very first time. There they were,—to be had free gratis and for nothing for several days before the entertainment. Doubtful electors and weak-kneed opponents were freely captured by the aid of these complimentary tickets in a constituency where politics count for little, and principles for less, and the popular standard by which all men (and especially political candidates) are estimated is—"How much money has he got, and is he willing to spend it?"

In a case like this the Corrupt Practices Act appears to be utterly useless. The candidate did not appear in the matter at all, except as the guest of the evening; but there was nothing to hinder him from subscribing any sum he liked to the funds of the Working Men's Association, or from purchasing numerous tickets for distribution through his agents.

Another indirect and artful way of getting at the poorer electors is through the agency of Benefit Clubs and Friendly Societies. There is scarcely a single Society of this description in Thanet of which Mr. Marks is not a member. He can attend their meetings, subscribe to their funds, assist sick or hard-up members, and be toasted every week as "a jolly good fellow," and there is nothing in the Corrupt Practices Act to prevent him. As a matter of fact, nearly every Lodge in Thanet was practically a Committee Room for Mr. Marks before the end of 1905.

But of all the methods adopted to capture votes I believe the most effective was the milk, coal, and grocery plan. I was once in a constituency many years ago (Pontefract) when it was calculated that every vote cost the successful candidate at least £10. But the methods here adopted were crude and costly, and not nearly so effective as the methods of Mr. Marks. At Pontefract secret agents—generally strangers to the district—went about with half-crowns and half sovereigns in their pockets, and bribed the electors wholesale. But how could these agents possibly know that the men whom they bribed a few days before the poll really voted for their nominee after all? Of course they could not be sure, and as a matter of fact many electors took bribes from both sides, and then voted according to their own ideas on the polling day. The money in hundreds of cases was utterly wasted. But the Thanet style of campaign was entirely different, both in its conception and working.

Long before the period of the election the sitting member was busy at work, with the aid of his family and his agents (declared and undeclared) building up a reputation for himself as a friend of the poor and the working man, and he certainly succeeded in gulling the majority of the electors into the adoption of this belief. He placed sums of money—considerable sums in many cases—at the disposal of clergymen, tradesmen and others, to be applied to the purchase of coal, and milk, and groceries, which were to be given to poor people in various parts of the constituency at the discretion

of the persons referred to. Little parcels of groceries were to be had at various stores, with a half-crown inside the string sometimes; milk was delivered every morning at scores of homes, and no bill to pay at the end of the week; coal and fire-wood found their way into the homes of the poor, and the neighbourhood rang with the praises of the generous man living in their midst who was playing Providence for their benefit. Ah, these were halcyon days for the poor electors of Thanet! A thousand pounds spent in this prudent way would go much further than ten thousand squandered on the Pontefract plan, and the permanent reputation for generosity built up on these lines would be worth hundreds of votes when the polling day came round. When the election period arrived it was not necessary to talk politics, or to try to convince the electors that any particular line of policy was right or wrong. To do him justice, Mr. Marks scarcely even attempted it. All that he did was to issue huge placards "Vote for Marks," and supplement them with "Marks Wins" towards the end. The bills did not tell the electors *why* they were to vote for Marks, but the electors understood it perfectly by this time. "For two years I have fed and feasted you, now it is your turn to do something for me. Vote for Marks!" *And that is how Thanet was won!*

II—TRAPPING YOUR OPPONENTS

It is considered perfectly proper by politicians of the Marks school to lay traps for opponents so as to induce them to violate the Corrupt Practices Act. The purpose of this is obvious. If the opponent happens to be successful, Mr. Marks has a case for a Petition; if the opponent brings a Petition, Mr. Marks is prepared with counter charges. This was practised in St. George's-in-the-East, and preparations were made for practising it in Thanet.

In a little volume published by Messrs. Jordan and Sons, entitled "The Candidates' and Agents' Guide in Contested Elections," there is a chapter by Ellis T. Powell, who is designated "Hon. Election Agent for Mr. H. H. Marks, M.P." On page 191 of this book the following sentences occur :

"With a view to making charges in connection with the Election expenses, the agent should endeavour to discover some announcement of his opponent's candidature sufficiently definite, if not too remote from the election, to be adopted as a starting point from which the expenses are to run. If a candidate has made no absolute declaration of his candidature, *he may often be trapped into one by the circulation of a report that he does not*

intend to stand, or intends standing somewhere else." As it is an offence against the Act to spread lying rumours of this kind with reference to a candidate, it will be seen that Mr. Powell's advice is to act illegally, in order to trap your opponent into a declaration of candidature. Evidently Mr. Marks has got an honorary agent after his own heart. I may state here that some time prior to the General Election, persistent rumours were set afloat in Thanet that Mr. King, the Liberal candidate, was about to retire, although there was not a word of truth in them, and it took a great deal of time and trouble to get the rumours contradicted. Similar reports were circulated later on with reference to Mr. McCormick-Goodhart, the Conservative candidate who opposed Mr. Marks on the ground of the latter's unfitness for public life. Mr. Powell's advice was clearly being acted on in a most systematic fashion by the persons who circulated these rumours. There was another little trap laid by some person or persons acting in Mr. Mark's interests which I should like to expose at the same time, for the benefit of any future opponent of the "honorable" member for Thanet. I do not believe that there is one other candidate or one other agent in the United Kingdom who would tolerate such disgraceful tactics on his own side for a single moment. I refer to the corruption of weak men in the employment of your opponents. Who does it is of course a mystery, but somebody employed by somebody else gets hold of a sub-agent employed by the other side, who is found to be weak,

makes friends with him, treats him, and is treated by him, and induces him to treat others in public, probably both electors and non-electors. If the weak agent referred to happens to be particularly gullible, the decoy leads him on to commit other breaches of the Corrupt Practices Act. He gets him to purchase flags and ribbons for use during the contest; he may even persuade him that it will be all right to enter them up in his expenditure book. It is here that this special kind of corruption becomes dangerous. The opposing candidate and his agent must of course eventually find out what has been done, and are naturally aghast at the position in which they are placed by the acts of their subordinate. If they are wise they will at once advise the proper authorities of what has been done against their wishes and instructions, and in due time apply to the High Court for relief. But if they do what it would be perfectly natural for them to do, viz., seek to cover up the acts of the sub-agent, so as to avoid publicity, then Mr. Marks would have them in his power.

I would seriously warn any future candidate who encounters the redoubtable Mr. Marks to be very very careful in the choice of his sub-agents.

III—COOKING THE ELECTION ACCOUNTS

ONE of the most important matters connected with electioneering is to keep within the limits prescribed by the Act. Every election agent knows the difficulty, and every scrupulous agent dreads being landed with bills which he is unable to pay without going beyond the maximum. It may be said *en passant* that it is sometimes well nigh impossible to keep the total expenditure within the prescribed limits, because in the pressure of election work it is often necessary to proceed without estimates, and some tradesmen think that an election is a golden harvest time when they can "put it on thick" with their charges. But an unscrupulous agent working for an unscrupulous candidate has no difficulty whatsoever. If you are prepared to adopt the methods of Mr. Marks, you will find it perfectly easy to spend £2000 or £3000 and yet make up your return showing a total expenditure of £1250. How is it done?

It is a simple arithmetical proposition that where a number of items of expenditure go to make up a total, if you can effect a saving upon one set of items you will have more to expend upon the others. Mr. Marks and his agent know the truth of this proposition, and are able to act upon it in a most

effective manner. To begin with Mr. Marks' chief agents and sub-agents, according to his Election Returns, cost him nothing at all! His opponents have to pay considerable sums under those heads, but Mr. Marks is more fortunate. His chief agent, Mr. Ellis T. Powell—who is an employee of *The Financial News*—gives his services gratis, and he appoints no sub-agents (?).

Those who really have the power of sub-agents are either scheduled as clerks at nominal salaries, or act as volunteers. It may be love for the cause, or personal affection for the candidate, which is their ruling motive, but anyhow they are entered up as underpaid clerks, or as working for nothing. For instance, one agent who took charge of an important district in Thanet was scheduled as a clerk who received the sum of £6 13s. 4d. for 20 days hard work during the period of the election. This sum was actually less than some of the Messengers received. We can easily understand why this sub-agent (for such he actually was) was reconciled to this petty sum, when we learn that a few weeks after it was calculated that all danger of an Election Petition was over, he received a purse containing over 70 sovereigns, from the Local Association and friends, together with an illuminated address, in which it was specifically stated that it was given largely in recognition of his election work. It may be added that the subscription list was started a week or two after the declaration of the poll.

Another case, still more striking, was that of a

man, whom I shall call Mr. Carrot,—a public servant, and professedly a Liberal in politics, whom Mr. Marks brought down from London to work for him during the election, and some very dirty work he did too—most admirably! This man was entered up in the Election Return as a clerk, who received a total salary of £6 for three weeks work. Carrot left his home and his employment in London, paid a deputy 30s. per week to do his work during his absence, forfeited various fees which would be receivable by him, paid all his expenses while in Thanet, and all for the magnificent sum of six pounds sterling! Of course it was untrue, and Carrot openly boasted on his return to London that he had been well paid for his work while in Thanet, and that he had been promised more later on. It may be asked why, if all this was known, was not an Election Petition started? The answer is simple, for this man's case is typical of many others. He was prepared to swear (he told me so himself) that he received no more than six pounds, and Mr. Marks's other tools would be equally unscrupulous if they were brought into Court. Under the law as it stands it would be impossible to cross-examine them, if you had sub-pœnaed them as witnesses—for they would then rank as *your witnesses*. Mr. Marks knows this well, and so does Mr. Carrot. Take another case to show the difficulty of proceeding under the existing law, even where you have clear evidence that the Act is being evaded. Mr. Marks employs agents who do not appear anywhere in the Election Return. One of these was

at work in a small town in Thanet, both before, during, and after the election. He was paid regularly by Mr. Marks for his work. He gave himself out as a "private secretary," and would have been prepared to swear that he did no election work. His secretarial duties consisted chiefly of consorting with Liberals and men of no especial political colour and standing them drinks in public houses. Indeed it might safely be affirmed that he spent more than half his time in this congenial occupation, and the rest of his time in obtaining and conveying information to headquarters. But he held no appointment, and was not entered either as a clerk or a messenger. Mr. Marks has other agents of the same character and they are really more effective workers amongst a certain class than political agents proper. Yet their work is so quietly done and so carefully covered over, that it would be difficult to prove that they were acting as agents of the candidate. It will always be exceedingly difficult to bring home cases of this kind unless and until we adopt the French method of giving evidence, in connection with election petitions, *i.e.*, give both sides the opportunity of calling and cross-examining all witnesses whose testimony has a direct bearing on the charges, and then let the Court judge of the value of their evidence. There should also be opportunity given to cross-examine the candidate and his chief agent on their election accounts.

I have only here dwelt upon a few of the methods employed by Mr. Marks in his Thanet campaign. I have not referred to cases of free drinks at public

houses on the polling day, or the other ordinary methods of corruption which were as freely employed in Thanet as in other Southern seaside constituencies. You have to deal with a very unreliable kind of witness when you start to prove these charges in Court, and the experience of the petitioners in St. George's-in-the-East was sufficient to show that no effort would be spared by Mr. Marks' agents to *get at* hostile witnesses so soon as their names were disclosed. This is another feature in connection with Election Petitions which calls for particular notice. If a man makes a statement affirming the truth of certain charges, and afterwards in Court goes back upon his deliberate word, a searching inquiry should be made into the case, and if it is found that intimidation or bribery has been practised, as is probably the case, no matter though the principals may have carefully kept out of it, it should be treated as a very serious offence. I know that it is supposed to be treated as such now, but my complaint is that it is not followed up sufficiently in order to bring it home to the principals, who will generally be found to be ultimately responsible for the whole procedure. The Public Prosecutor is supposed to inquire into all such cases, but how often does he do so? It is the knowledge of this official slackness which gives unscrupulous candidates and agents additional licence, and paralyses the efforts of those who seek to bring about a better state of affairs in electoral contests. The expense of election petitions is another great drawback. Surely it should be pos-

sible for a candidate who has been defeated by a cumulative system of corruption and illegality to obtain justice without risking several thousands of pounds? When we consider that it is generally the wealthy candidate whose return is being challenged, and that his opponent has probably spent as much money as he can well afford upon his election expenses proper, it is obvious that a most formidable difficulty arises at the very outset, when the latter endeavours to obtain justice by means of an Election Petition. Surely some less expensive and equally effective method could be found of trying these petitions, and so give poorer candidates as good a chance of obtaining redress as their wealthier opponents.

J. C. HAIG.

16th June, 1906.

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